

# PREFACE

The thirteenth edition of *The Short Prose Reader* maintains the best features of the earlier editions: lively reading selections supported by helpful apparatus to integrate reading and writing in college composition and reading courses. In working through the text, the student progresses from key aspects of the writing and reading processes to chapters on the essential patterns of writing and then to more rigorous forms of analysis and argument. Each chapter provides diverse and lively prose models suited for discussion, analysis, and imitation.

New features of the thirteenth edition include:

- **Many new reading selections**, with essays by John Grisham, Anna Quindlen, Richard Rodriguez, Barry Lopez, Andrew Lam, and Deborah Tannen. We balance these contemporary readings—all published since 2000—with favorites from earlier editions of *The Short Prose Reader*, such as Langston Hughes’s “Salvation,” George Orwell’s “A Hanging,” Amy Tan’s “Mother Tongue,” and Rachel Carson’s “A Fable for Tomorrow.”
- **New topics and issues** that will appeal to students, among them texting from an automobile, Internet privacy, the Facebook phenomenon, and Muslim identity.
- **A revised table of contents** that lets students move from easier rhetorical strategies to more challenging ones (like classification and definition) that stress synthetic and higher-order cognitive abilities.
- **New units in the thematic table of contents**, including Scenes and Places, Cultures and Ethnicities, Nature and the Environment, and Language and Identity.

- **A major revision of Chapter 11, Argumentation and Persuasion**, with a fresh pro/con pair on social networking and new selections on the “Perspectives on Ethnicity” Unit.
- **New visuals** throughout *The Short Prose Reader* that encourage students to move from seeing to writing.
- **A Guide to Research and Documentation**, which follows the most recent MLA guidelines.
- **Links to the online learning center (OLC)** integrated throughout the text. The OLC provides students with links to more information about some of the writers in this collection.

These features enhance the key elements of *The Short Prose Reader* that have made the previous twelve editions so enduringly popular.

## ORGANIZATION

The organization of *The Short Prose Reader* is one of its major strengths. Chapter 1, On Writing, and Chapter 2, On Reading, offer students brief overviews of these two interdependent skills; each chapter offers four unique views on the crafts of writing or reading by well-known writers. Each of the following eight chapters contains four short essays that illustrate clearly a specific pattern or technique—description, narration, process analysis, illustration, comparison and contrast, causal analysis, classification, or definition. The final chapter is on argumentation. Students learn to build upon earlier techniques and patterns as they progress through the book.

## READABILITY

From the beginning, we have chosen selections for *The Short Prose Reader* that are readable yet substantial and representative of many different types of writers. The essays, which range typically between 300 and 1,200 words, achieve their goals succinctly and clearly and are easy to understand. They exemplify both the types of college writing expected of students and the length of essay that is frequently assigned. The detailed questions that follow each essay can be used in reading as well as writing classes, since they ask the student to analyze both the content and the form of the prose selections.

## APPARATUS

The questions and activities we have included for each piece are comprehensive and integrated—designed to develop and reinforce the key critical-thinking skills required in college writing.

- **Extensive biographical notes:** The headnotes preceding the selections provide valuable information about each writer, giving students more tools for reading the essays critically.
- **Prereading questions:** Before each essay, students encounter an activity called Prereading: Thinking About the Essay in Advance, which encourages them to think and talk about the topic before reading what the writer says about it. Studies show that such prior discussion arouses interest and holds the reader's attention.
- **Vocabulary exercises:** Each selection includes two vocabulary exercises. Words to Watch alerts students to words they will read in context, and Building Vocabulary uses other effective methods of teaching vocabulary, including attention to prefixes and suffixes, context clues, synonyms and antonyms, and abstract versus concrete words.
- **Questions that emphasize critical thinking:** To emphasize critical thinking as the main reason for questioning and discussion, we have grouped our conversational prods and probes under the heading Thinking Critically About the Essay. The questions titled Understanding the Writer's Ideas reinforce reading comprehension. The questions titled Understanding the Writer's Techniques and Exploring the Writer's Ideas provide excellent bases for class discussion and independent reading and analysis.
- **Prewriting prompts:** These sections help students record informal thoughts for writing in advance of producing an essay.
- **Guided Writing Activities:** A key exercise for each essay and a novel feature of *The Short Prose Reader*, the Guided Writing activities offer a dynamic approach to writing projects. These activities tie the writing project to the reading selection, but instead of simply being told to write an essay on a certain topic, students can use the Guided Writing segment to move from step to step in the composing process.
- **Collaborative activities:** Thinking and Writing Collaboratively activities encourage students to work together in groups on essays and ideas for writing.

- **Reader response activities:** Writing About the Text asks students to examine closely the language and ideas in each selection and to write thoughtfully about them.
- **Additional writing projects:** More Writing Projects provides students with additional ideas for writing on the topic of the selection.

At the end of each chapter is a **Summing Up** section, a means for students to focus their attention on issues raised by several of the chapter's selections and on more writing topics, and a **From Seeing to Writing** activity, an engaging visual assignment that gives students another means of coming up with ideas for writing. And at the end of the text is an **appendix on research and documentation**, including a step-by-step guide to the research process, a section on using MLA style to document sources, and a sample student research paper on body image and advertising that uses a visual as support.

## FLEXIBILITY

Students and teachers alike can use *The Short Prose Reader* flexibly and effectively. An alternate table of contents suggests thematic groupings of readings. The text is simple yet sophisticated, inviting students to engage in a multiplicity of cultural and traditional topics through essays and exercises that are easy to follow but never condescending. Weighing the needs and expectations of today's first-year students, we have designed a rhetoric/reader that can serve as the primary text for almost any composition course.

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## ANCILLARIES

- **The Instructor's Manual** provides teaching approaches for each chapter and essay, along with answers to the vocabulary and critical-thinking questions that follow each essay.

- **The text's companion Web site at [www.mhhe.com/shortprose13e](http://www.mhhe.com/shortprose13e)** offers three types of links—cultural, bibliographical, and biographical—to further information on selected authors within *The Short Prose Reader*.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For this edition of *The Short Prose Reader*, we enjoyed the support of John Kindler, our sponsoring editor, who has brought a fresh perspective and calm persistence to the project. We are also deeply grateful for the patient and extraordinary efforts of Janice Wiggins-Clarke, our development editor.

We wish to thank our colleagues across the country for their support:

Andrew Tomko, *Bergen Community College*

Brett Bodily, *North Lake College*

David-Michael Allen, *Donnelly College*

Ellen Laird, *Hudson Valley Community College*

Kathryn Lacey, *Cincinnati State University*

Magdalena Aquilar, *El Paso Community College*

Marina Gore, *Hudson Valley Community College*

Mary B. Caldwell, *El Paso Community College*

Matthew Goldstein, *Laney College*

Rachel Bornn, *Hudson Valley Community College*

Sara Tedesco, *Hudson Valley Community College*

Theodore Johnston, *El Paso Community College*

*Gilbert H. Muller*

*Harvey S. Wiener*